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Skill Builders: Perceived Skills Enhanced by Students through Participation in High School Extracurricular Activities

Jonathan H. Hayes
Gardner-Webb University

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By
Jonathan H. Hayes

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Student Name under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

_____	_____
A. Doug Eury, Ed.D. Committee Chair	Date
_____	_____
David Shellman, Ed.D. Committee Member	Date
_____	_____
Robert C. McOuat, Ed.D. Committee Member	Date
_____	_____
Jeffrey Rogers, Ph.D. Dean of the Gayle Bolt Price School of Graduate Studies	Date

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Abstract

Skills Builders: Extracurricular Activities and the Perceived Skills Enhanced by Students through Participation in High School. Hayes, Jonathan H., 2014: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, High Schools/Extracurricular Activities/Skills/Student Grades

This dissertation was designed to examine what skills or characteristics high school students felt they enhanced through participating in school-based extracurricular activities that might lead to academic success. Various extracurricular activities are offered in high schools, and participation often requires large amounts of student time and effort. Social, academic, and honorary clubs and activities as well as athletic teams were included in this research.

The writer gathered qualitative data from student surveys regarding school-based extracurricular involvement to examine the skills enhanced through participation. All tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students completed a survey identifying their participation in school-based extracurricular activities while in high school. Those who participated in two activities or more completed an additional survey, a Likert scale survey, about their views on the skills enhanced through participating in school-based extracurricular activities. At the time of this research, no ninth-grade student was included in this research due to their lack of opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Research has shown positive outcomes for adolescents who participate in a breadth of extracurricular activities including positive academic, psychological, and behavioral adjustment in school (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Some examples of positive outcomes for students who are engaged in extracurricular activities are having less involvement in problematic behaviors, being around supportive adults, facilitating membership in pro-social groups, and making positive connections to others (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Knifsend & Graham, 2011). These outcomes can be attributed in part to the positive reinforcement of common norms and values members of extracurricular activities share. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds also gain a higher academic perception through their involvement in athletics, while all socioeconomic groups benefited from their involvement in nonsport extracurriculars (Guest & Schneider, 2003).

Several studies using longitudinal data support adolescent involvement in extracurricular activities. Knifsend and Graham (2011) gathered data to evaluate the breadth of multiple extracurricular activities students were involved in and the effects on student academic success. The academic success of at-risk and multiple-level socioeconomic students has been studied using longitudinal data (Covey & Carbonaro, 2010; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Peck, Roeser, Zarrett, & Eccles, 2008). There have also been studies connecting adolescent participation in extracurricular activities to positive youth development in school and in the community (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006).

Guest and Schneider (2003) used longitudinal data to study how school and

community contexts play a role in the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities. Adolescents involved in sports were seen as good students if they were from poor communities with low academic expectations, whereas nonsport extracurricular participants were seen as good students in schools from wealthier communities with higher academic expectations. This study found value in students participating in extracurricular activities, but that value was dependent on social context.

Most of the current available research on the relationship between academic achievement and school-based extracurricular activities focuses on whether or not participation in extracurricular activities has been shown to have a positive relationship (Broh, 2002; Eccles et al., 2003; Knifsend & Graham, 2011; Lipscomb, 2007; Peck et al., 2008) or, in some cases, a negative relationship (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hunt, 2005; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000) relating to student outcomes. Being involved in extracurricular activities helps students form attachments and connections with their schools and communities, enabling them to be seen as valued members of the school and community. Students also have the opportunity to make positive connections with caring adults, such as coaches and club advisors, who act as mentors and problem solvers for adolescents. These attachments help students internalize other aspects of the school's agenda, such as academics, which should result in higher academic achievement (Eccles et al., 2003). Negative consequences include higher alcohol use (Eccles & Barber, 1999), a greater likelihood of recruitment into a risky peer group (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000), and increased stress and anxiety (Fredricks, Alfeld-Liro, Eccles, Hruda, Patrick, & Ryan, 2002) for participants.

Although there are several studies linking academic achievement to extracurricular involvement, the emphasis in this research was on the perceived skills or

characteristics that are enhanced from being involved in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities have been described as planned experiences outside of school subjects that, although seemingly less important, in many ways are more significant. Lessons regarding competition, good sportsmanship, and team play are all learned on the playing field (Posner, 2004). Important skills that are valued by companies, such as leadership, can be learned by adolescents and developed through participation in high school extracurricular activities. These learned and/or developed skills in athletics and clubs also have a large effect on future adult wages (Kuhn & Weinberger, 2002; Lipscomb, 2007).

Setting of the Study

The setting for this study was an above average-sized state high school of almost 1,600 students in central North Carolina. The school district where the study took place had an enrollment of nearly 20,000 students comprised of 89% White students, 4.5% Black students, 4.5% Hispanic students, and 2 % students from other races. Ninety-seven percent of the high school teachers in the district were highly-qualified teachers, three percentage points above the state average for high school teachers (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2013).

Each student at the high school received a survey to complete that included questions regarding basic demographic information, school-based extracurricular involvement during high school, and perceptions on what skills or characteristics, if any, were enhanced while participating in those school-based extracurricular activities. High school club sponsors and coaches at the researched school were surveyed about their views on student participation in school-based extracurricular activities while in high school.

Research Problem

Most of the previous literature and research has indicated that there is a positive relationship between participation in school-based extracurricular activities, academic achievement, and positive character traits learned (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Lipscomb, 2007). There is, however, less research on the types of perceived skills or characteristics that are gained and/or enhanced from student involvement in extracurricular activities. Chia (2005) studied the effects of academics, extracurricular activities, and emotional intelligence on interviewing and job offers from multinational accounting firms and found that soft/noncognitive skills are important and rarely taught in formal accounting education programs. These skills are more important to the business community than technical skills due to the rapid changes in the global business environment. Having integrity/honesty and a good work ethic were seen as the most important characteristics needed to enter the workplace (English, Manton, Sami, & Dubey, 2012). This research also found that listening skills, common sense, self-motivation, problem-solving abilities, maturity, and critical thinking skills are important workplace qualities for employees.

A 2007 survey of the 400 leading managers in American corporations found that 70% of high school graduates do not possess the work ethic skills or professionalism needed in the workplace (Bronson, 2007). Robles (2012) found that corporations want candidates with soft skills that can add value to their business. Through the use of interviews and surveys, Robles used data collected from two junior-level business communications classes as part of a final collegiate project to determine critical soft skills needed from employees. The figure below illustrates the top 10 soft skill attributes executives feel their employees must possess in the workplace.

Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening
Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful
Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable
Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what's right
Interpersonal Skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills
Positive Attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident
Professionalism – businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, poised
Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative
Work Ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

Figure. Ten Soft Skill Attributes Categorized from Executive Listings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to existing literature and research on the value for students in participating in school-based extracurricular activities. This study examined whether there are specific skills or characteristics enhanced from participating in school-based extracurricular activities while in high school that may lead to human skills that are predictors of individual success. Skills identified through data collection using student surveys are labeled into three categories: academic, psychological, and behavioral. These three labeled categories were analyzed to determine if trends or themes existed for these enhanced skills for participants. Survey results collected from sponsors and coaches were evaluated to establish trends that may be evident but not necessarily conclusive.

Definition of Terms

Breadth. Refers to the combination of extracurricular activities students are

involved in during school; this combination includes groups such as athletics, clubs, band, or academic groups.

Constructs. For the purposes of this study, constructs are defined as a complex or broad idea formed from a compilation of simpler parts or ideas; for example, educational outcomes (complex idea) and 2-year degree or 4-year degree programs (simpler parts or ideas).

Pro-social groups. Adolescents who are involved in organized, school-based extracurricular activities with other nondeviant peers who share common norms and values, such as valuing academics; these groups oftentimes have positive influences on other members of the group.

Psychosocial competencies. For the purposes of this study, psychosocial competencies regards an adolescent's ability to respond appropriately to a variety of social situations.

GPA (Grade Point Average). The number of grade points a student earned in a period of time divided by the total number of credits taken; this average can be used by potential employers or educational institutions to compare applicants.

School-based extracurricular activity. Any club, sport, or sponsored activity by the school that is in addition to academic courses offered at the school.

Locus of control. A psychological theory that refers to the extent individuals believe they can control events that affect their lives; high locus of control means being better prepared for events, whereas low locus of control is a lack of preparedness.

Noncognitive/soft skills. Refers to sets of skills a person possesses including personality traits, communication, personal habits, and optimism in personal relationships that aid in daily interactions.

Social capital. The benefits gained through social contact with others or being a member of a social network.

Social context. In this analysis, social context refers to the type of activity (band, clubs, athletics), the community demographics (poor/affluent, urban/rural, race) of the participants, and when the activity took place in history (determines how it is valued by the community); the *what, where,* and *when*.

Threshold. The point at which a stimulus is of sufficient intensity to begin to produce an effect.

National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS/NELS:88). A nationally representative, longitudinal study in 1988 that was sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education.

Title I school. A school that receives federal funding from the United States Department of Education due to having a high proportion of students from low-income backgrounds.

Research Questions

1. What perceived skills or characteristics are enhanced from participating in school-based extracurricular activities?

2. What are the contributions of participation in extracurricular activities in relation to the perceived skills or characteristics gained?

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations that exist with this study, most notably the use of only one high school for research. To make an assumption that all high schools across the State of North Carolina are identical to the information found in this research is not possible, although similar trends may exist. Academic course offerings vary from school

to school and could be an influence in student perceptions at the high school participating in this study.

The socioeconomic and racial make-up of the high school studied, although the most diverse in the county, is not reflective of all high schools across the State of North Carolina. Results may be influenced by these factors, as some studies have found youths from low-income families benefit more from extracurricular activities than those youths from higher-income families (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Peck et al., 2008). Socioeconomic information, such as family income, was not used in this study.

Finally, the survey instruments used to gather information for this research assumed the participants provided accurate information for study. No other means of clarification, such as individual student and sponsor/coach interviews, were used in this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

Previous research has shown that students who participate in school-based extracurricular activities gain positive academic, psychological, and youth development skills that contribute to higher academic success in high school and future educational attainment (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Eccles et al., 2003). The purpose of this chapter is to review what the literature says regarding school-based extracurricular activities, academic achievement, and skill development through participation in these activities. The chapter is divided into the following sections: value of extracurricular activities, extracurricular activities and effect on participants' grades, effects on participants' noncognitive skills, limiting the number of activities, and skills or characteristics gained and/or enhanced through participation.

Value of Extracurricular Activities

The mission for the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every student in the public school system will graduate from high school globally competitive for work and postsecondary education opportunities and prepared for life in the 21st Century ("Mission statement," 2014). While college admissions offices typically admit students based on such measures as scores on college entrance exams (ACT Assessment) and high school GPAs to predict academic success for incoming freshman (Noble & Sawyer, 2002), school-based opportunities separate from the classroom exist for students to gain or enhance skills while in high school that will prepare them for postsecondary education and life in the 21st Century. As previously stated, research indicates there is a positive relationship between academic achievement, extracurricular activities, and positive character traits learned (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Lipscomb, 2007).

Through research obtained while analyzing the relationship of participation in extracurricular activities to student achievement, attendance, and behavior, Dick (2010) quoted a report from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching that recommended states promote cocurricular activities for high school students. These activities were determined to be integral to a student's education and provide opportunities that support and extend academic learning. This report also suggested the term extracurricular be replaced with cocurricular because the term *extra* seemed to infer that these activities were not part of the school's mission and emphasized that cocurricular activities should be an integral component of a student's educational program.

Instead of focusing on student deficits, such as dropout prevention and student remediation groups, participation in extracurricular activities allows students, including those considered at-risk, to belong to programs that are voluntary and provide them with a positive connection to school (Bryan, 2005). This supports the assertions of Klesse and D'Onofrio (2000) that students who are not involved in extracurricular activities are 57% more likely to drop out of high school before their senior year than those who participate in school-based extracurricular activities between 1-4 hours per week. These positive connections provided by participating in extracurricular activities also encourage personal accomplishments and the development of interpersonal skills through opportunities to assume meaningful roles and responsibilities in the organization and/or activity.

Beard, Schwieger, and Surendran (2008) reviewed current literature regarding soft skills, educational assessment issues/concerns, and academic requirements of

accrediting institutions such as the American Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), as well as other individual and professional organizations responsible for the design and implementation of assessments as they relate to Information Technology, Accounting, and other College of Business courses of study. Conclusions from this literature review found that an increased emphasis on soft skills such as communication, interpersonal, leadership, and teamwork were needed in educational programs rather than a sole emphasis on technical skills. Employees will interact with individuals at various levels of an organization and will need to be adept at working with those who possess an array of professional strengths. It was noted that college graduates lacked deftness in communication (verbal and written) and leadership, skills that employers deem necessary to be effective team members. To address the lack of soft skill development at the university level, Beard et al. (2008) found that Southeast Missouri State University developed initiatives to strengthen soft skills and formally assess these skills through case studies, special projects, group work, and oral and written presentations.

Equipping students with skills beyond academic intelligence increases the opportunities for students to be better prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce (Gaines & Mohammed, 2013). A growing demand for a skilled workforce from the business community requires schools to prepare students for a modern workplace, one where soft skills such as professionalism and collaboration are more important than reading comprehension and mathematics. Several states are incorporating specific soft skill instruction into their K-12 curriculum for students. The Virginia Department of Education uses skills from research conducted at the Weldon Cooper Center on the campus of the University of Virginia. These 21 essential workplace

readiness skills are taught in all public Career and Technical Education courses in the State of Virginia. With the passage of HB-186 in Georgia, high school students have the opportunity to earn a certificate in soft skills that promote skills such as punctuality, ability to learn, and the ability to work in a team. This policy addressed concerns educators, business and civic leaders, and government officials raised regarding deficiencies young job seekers have, including punctuality and poor communication skills. Plymouth High School in Wisconsin uses a 4-point soft skill rubric developed by teachers and local businesses to assess student advancement in the areas of collaboration, respect, initiative, and work habits. This is not a separate curriculum, but one that embeds these concepts into the day-to-day activities and assignments in each course. One important lesson learned from this partnership was the students' abilities to connect their in-school soft skill training to the workplace. Students were oftentimes unable to link the value of those skills to their college and career goals and did not perceive them as equally valuable to their academic skills.

Extracurricular Activities and Effects on Participants' Grades

School-based extracurricular activities provide environments that are highly structured and allow for adolescents to express control and identity through activities that are supervised by adults (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005). Recent studies have shown that on average, high school students participate in two or three extracurricular activities per year (Fredricks & Eccles, 2010). Participation in extracurricular activities has also been linked to higher GPAs, school engagement, and educational aspirations (Elder & Conger, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1999). Sports participation was also found to lower the chances of school dropout and higher attendance in college for low-achieving and blue-collar male athletes (Gould & Weiss,

1987; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; McNeal, 1995).

Mahoney and Cairns (1997) identified several extracurricular activities that students participate in: organized sports, special-interest academic clubs/organizations (Spanish, Latin), student government organizations, vocational clubs, school newspapers, yearbooks, and various other activities. Their study examined the relationship between extracurricular participation and early school dropouts for middle and high school students. Information for the study was gathered through annual interviews with participants, staff surveys including Interpersonal Competence Scale, and demographic and participation information gathered from school yearbooks. Data were collected from two middle schools beginning in two different years, where there was a 70% participation rate of the 392 (206 girls, 186 boys) students sampled. These longitudinal data were collected for 6 years beginning in the seventh grade and completed in the twelfth grade with between 89-99% of the original sample participating each year in the study. African-American participants totaled 25%. In previous studies cited by Mahoney and Cairns, many of these activities could raise a student's social status in his/her school, making it a more meaningful experience for students who have not always had success in regular academic courses. Their research indicated that participation in extracurricular activities decreases early dropout rates for students. Positive and voluntary connections to the school and its members and a strengthened student-school connection were referenced as reasons for this positive relationship.

In a longitudinal study on extracurricular activities and adolescent development conducted on individuals beginning in sixth grade and ending at age 25-26, students consistently had higher GPAs in the twelfth grade and had a greater likelihood of attending college full-time (Eccles et al., 2003). This study, referred to as The Michigan

Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT), followed approximately 1,800 youths through eight different times of data collection between the years of 1983 and 1997. The sample was comprised of students from mostly White, middle/working-class communities in small industrial cities around the Detroit area. The study focused on students who completed a survey regarding their activity involvement while in the tenth grade and included extensive interviews. Some of the constructs used in the study included activity involvement, risky behaviors, educational outcomes, and job and family characteristics. Eccles et al. (2003) summarized their work with the MSALT study to determine that school attachment (academic achievement, higher educational aspirations, and reduced likelihood of dropping out of school) was also found to be increased with participation in extracurriculars. This same study found mixed results for participation in sports. There was an increased use of alcohol among athletes, but there was also a strong link to positive educational and occupational outcomes. Jordan and Nettles (2000) found students who participated in structured after-school activities in the tenth grade showed positive educational outcomes in the twelfth grade. Conversely, those who did not participate in structured activities were at greater risk for negative outcomes educationally.

Adolescents who begin high school and are considered at-risk are two times as likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college if they were involved in extracurricular activities more than 1 day per week (Roeser & Peck, 2003). The Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS) is a longitudinal study of youth development that includes areas such as family, school, and peer group contexts (Peck et al., 2008). Participants studied were from Prince George's County over a 7-year period from 1991-1997 that included 49% female and 60% African Americans. Data

were collected in six different waves beginning at either the end of the participant's eighth-grade or beginning of ninth-grade school year. Participants in the study included youth and their primary caregivers who were interviewed individually, completed a questionnaire independently, and matched by race when possible. Although several participants dropped out of the study, there were enough youth considered high risk to answer questions of the effects of activity involvement on educational future choices (a probability indicator variable was created and used). Measures used in the study included personal and social factors that were hypothesized to support or negate a student's motivation at school, demographic characteristics (i.e. sex, race, parental income and education, test scores), extracurricular activities, and educational attainment based on enrollment in college. Peck el al. (2008) expanded on previous research from Roeser and Peck (2003) to determine that college enrollment rose dramatically for students who were involved in school clubs and sports, sports and volunteering, multiple activities, or school clubs only. Students who were relatively unengaged in these activities or were primarily in paid work positions after school were less likely to seek postsecondary education.

An economic research study using sample data collected from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 and whose participants were re-interviewed in 1990 and 1992, concluded that participation in extracurricular activities is beneficial for secondary school students (Lipscomb, 2007). This sample data included detailed information gathered on 16,305 students through questions regarding the involvement in school-sponsored clubs and sports the participants were involved with in the previous 12-month period, although smaller samples were used depending on the information collected for each student. On average, students who participated in extracurricular activities in the twelfth grade improved their test performance compared

to nonparticipants earning lower scores. Participating in clubs had a 1% increase in math test scores while athletic participation showed a 2% increase in both math and science test scores. Men were more likely to participate in sports while women were more likely to participate in clubs. Sport participation decreased with age partly due to level of play, while club interest increased through twelfth grade (bolster college applications). Participating in either type of activity (clubs or sports) was associated with a 5% increase in the expectation of obtaining a Bachelor's degree. Students who were involved in both sports and clubs increased their expectations of earning a college degree by almost 10%.

In the 2008 school year, more than 7.4 million students participated in high school athletics across the United States (Associated Press, 2008). In several studies conducted in recent years, positive effects have been found between students who participate in high school athletics and their academic success. Yiannakis and Melnick (2001) found positive effects for students who participate in high school athletics on their grades, educational aspirations, and self-concept. This study also found there to be a negative effect on discipline problems for athletes.

Broh (2002) analyzed available research from NELS:88 that was gathered at three different times in a 4-year period beginning in eighth grade and ending in twelfth grade to address the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement. Students involved in the study completed surveys; were administered cognitive tests in reading, science, math, and social studies; and had their current and postsecondary transcripts analyzed. Questionnaires were completed by parents, teachers and school administrators. Participants included a sample of 24,599 eighth-grade students from over 1,000 public, private, and parochial schools in the United States. From the data analyzed, Broh found students who participated in high school athletics

had a stronger sense of control over their lives, positive social ties (academically oriented friends) that are beneficial in educational pursuits, and significantly higher self-esteem. Participation in high school athletics was found to increase the overall development of the student as well as to raise their academic achievement.

Fejgin (1994) also used data from NELS:88 in her research to assess the effect of athletic participation on student outcomes. Her studies found that high school athletic participation had an overall positive impact on educational aspirations. Students who participated in high school athletics were found to not only have higher grades than nonparticipants, but also to have higher self-concept, aspirations for their education, fewer discipline problems, and a stronger internal locus of control. High school athletics help to develop a student's internal locus of control through both successes and failures during competition. This act of *building character* helps students develop their ability to be better prepared for all activities. Being part of a team is positive recognition that the athlete possesses a skill that is valued, thus having a positive effect on the athlete both athletically and academically. Athletes were also found to comply with school rules more readily due to the strict requirements of following team rules and regulations. Both studies (Broh, 2002; Fejgin) pointed out not only the academic achievements of athletic participants but the social improvements of students as well. Participating in school-based extracurricular activities may provide more protection against problematic activities such as drugs and alcohol as compared to those involved in unstructured leisure activities (Caldwell & Darling, 1999; Shann, 2001).

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA, 2008) referenced a study from the North Carolina High School Athletic Association conducted by Roger Whitley (1995) on student athletes and their GPAs as compared to their

nonathletic counterparts. The study used quantitative data gathered from schools that were members of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA, 2012). These schools were arranged by classification (1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A) based on their Average Daily Membership. The results that were analyzed tested the study's null hypothesis which was that there was no difference in the overall educational performance of athletes and nonathletes in the North Carolina High Schools that responded to the survey utilized in the study. The results illustrated that from the 126,700 students included in the study over a 3-year period, students who participated in athletics had an average GPA of 2.86 as compared to the GPA of students who did not participate in athletics (2.00). The results in Table 1 illustrate the GPAs of athletes and nonathletes in this study.

Table 1

Grade Point Averages of Athletes and Nonathletes

Variable	Number of Pairs	Mean GPA	Paired Differences Mean	t value	2-tail Significance (*p)
Athletes	133	2.86	.86	31.77	<.0001*
Nonathletes		2.00			

Note. *p < .0024.

According to the same study, athletes also enjoyed a higher graduation rate (99.56%) than their nonathletic (94.66%) counterparts. The results in Table 2 illustrate the graduation rates for athletes and nonathletes in this study.

Table 2

Graduation Rates for Athletes and Nonathletes

Variable	Number of Pairs	Mean Aver. Grad. Rate	Paired Differences Mean	t value	2-tail Significance (*p)
Athletes	133	99.54	4.92	14.53	<.0001*
Nonathletes		94.61			

Note. *p < .0024.

Student achievement levels on standardized tests were significantly higher for those schools with successful athletic teams (Bowen & Greene, 2012). Teams with higher winning percentages had a 0.25 percentage point increase in the number of students who performed at or above proficiency on state tests. The more sports a student participated in, the higher the levels of academic achievement on standardized state tests, according to this study. SAT/ACT requirements for high school athletes to be admitted into colleges could also be a factor in increased academic success for high school athletes ("NCAA eligibility center," 2012).

The value of participating in extracurricular activities sometimes depends on the social context (Guest & Schneider, 2003). This study used data collected from the Alfred P. Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development, a 5-year longitudinal study of middle and high school students from across the United States. Information was gathered using a combination of surveys, interviews, and experience sampling data and was collected in four different waves from 1992-1997. Students involved in the study were from varying racial/ethnic, economic, urbanization, and labor force backgrounds in public schools. Results found that individuals who participated in sports were more likely to be seen as

higher achieving students only if they are from lower- and middle-class communities with lower academic expectations. Those from wealthier communities with higher academic expectations were more likely seen as higher achieving students if they participated in nonsport extracurricular activities. Students who participated in athletics in high schools where the majority of students go to 4-year colleges were sometimes seen as less serious academically than peers who participated in nonsport activities.

There are some who believe that there is a negative and/or no association between participation in high school extracurricular activities and academic achievement. Through the distribution of anonymous questionnaires at an urban high school, Fisher, Juszczak, and Friedman (1996) studied 838 students who participated in athletics. Fisher et al. found that many had unrealistic viewpoints on earning college athletic scholarships based on their athletic participation in high school. Gehring (2004) found that some student athletes are passed through courses due to both increased pressure from communities to have successful athletic programs and increased television coverage of high school sporting events. Din's (2005) study in rural high schools found that there was no significant difference in athletes' grades either preseason or postseason. Participating in a wide variety of extracurricular activities does not correlate into higher grades and does not consistently influence educational expectations for students (Hunt, 2005). Negative peer dynamics in less structured activities are present in some extracurricular activities and encourage some social norms deemed undesirable (Eder & Parker, 1987; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000).

Some information exists that points to activities students participate in helping to determine the types of skills learned. Broh (2002) found that students involved in team sports were more likely to gain stronger social ties with peers (social capital), but

individual sports may build a stronger work ethic and locus of control for participants. Involvement in school-based athletics was also deemed advantageous for students' educational pursuits.

Effects on Participants' Noncognitive Skills

Scholars and youth policy advocates argue that students who participate in high-quality extracurricular activities, such as athletic teams and clubs, are provided opportunities for growth and development as well as the activities being a productive use of time (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Holland & Andre, 1987; Larson, 2000). Covey and Carbonaro (2010) used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 to study participation in extracurricular activities for elementary students and the relationship with socioeconomic status. Data was taken from a national sample of 21,260 students with the focus being on their early childhood experiences. The analysis focused on the wave of data taken in the student's third-grade year. The results found that participation in extracurricular activities helped improve many noncognitive student skills including, but not limited to, working well in groups, task persistence, independence, following instructions, and dealing with authority figures. Extracurricular activities were specifically cited as a place for noncognitive skills such as cooperation and teamwork to be practiced and developed. Sports and dance were two activities that were found to have more of a profound impact on noncognitive skills. The research suggested that involvement in these activities provided students the opportunity to learn and practice important noncognitive skills that help facilitate learning that can be transferred in or out of the classroom. Covey and Carbonaro reported that the research on the extracurricular participation of students in elementary schools needs to be expanded upon because students who are not involved in sports or fine arts in elementary school

find it difficult to participate in high school.

Students who participate in sports and clubs have better interpersonal skills, as noted by their teachers, than students who do not participate in extracurricular activities (Fletcher, Nickerson, & Wright, 2003). Scholars and advocates in favor of participation in sports and school clubs would argue that these activities provide a productive use of adolescents' time as well as opportunities for growth and development (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Evidence also suggests that involvement and participation in athletics strongly correlates to being a more involved member of one's own community in the future (Perks, 2007).

Voluntarily participating in school-based, extracurricular activities has been shown to help students acquire interpersonal skills and positive social norms, gain membership in pro-social peer groups, and create stronger emotional and social connections to one's school. These individuals spend a considerable amount of time together either at practice or working on projects discussing goals and values, developing friendships, and sharing previous experiences. These interactions also contribute to the likelihood of increasing school engagement, school achievement, and long-term educational outcomes from the cultural experiences and discussions (Eccles et al., 2003). The same study found that those participating in extracurricular activities liked school more than those who did not participate in school-sponsored activities.

Fredricks and Eccles (2006) used data from The Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS), one of the most comprehensive studies of African-American adolescents and their normative development. Participants in the study were drawn from low-income neighborhoods, high-risk urban neighborhoods, middle-class neighborhoods, and rural communities in the seventh grade and continued

through the subject's 20s. More African-American families were represented (67%) than White families (33%), all contacted by a note from the school to the student's parents who then completed surveys and interviews. The study found that participation in a range of extracurricular activities predicted higher psychosocial competencies and a more favorable peer context. The same study found that participating in multiple extracurricular activities may help youth compensate for negative experiences in one activity.

For those students whose prior commitment to their school has been small, participation in school-sponsored extracurricular activities creates a positive and voluntary connection to the school (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). This connection serves to promote student interests, achievements, and goals that provide a more meaningful experience for students who have not experienced previous academic successes. Adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities are oftentimes more likely to associate themselves with nondeviant peers who value academics (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney, 2000). Due to positive feedback and greater public recognition that students receive from participating in sports, athletics were seen to have a more profound positive psychological effect on student educational outcomes as compared to school-sponsored clubs (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). There were more opportunities for publicly recognized mastery of skill-related context in athletics than school-sponsored clubs which leads to more favorable mental health for those athletic participants.

High school athletic participation in particular has been shown in several studies to benefit students in many ways. Hanson and Kraus (1998) theorized that athletics instill values for everyday life, such as goal setting, success, and hard work, which will enable students to become productive members of society. Research on adolescent

involvement in athletics concluded that participation in athletics promotes positive attributes such as self-esteem and leadership qualities in student athletes (Eppright, Sanfacon, Beck, & Bradley, 1997). Each of these studies would suggest to the reader that participation in athletics has a positive impact on academic achievement through the development of positive qualities needed for success in such academic endeavors.

Participation in more than one structured extracurricular activity provides the most beneficial outcome for adolescents (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Kuhn and Weinberger (2002) analyzed three longitudinal data sets for their research on leadership skills: Project Talent in 1960, NLS72 in 1972, and High School and Beyond in 1982. Each of the three studies included survey information on family backgrounds, scores from high school cognitive and psychological tests, and labor market outcomes for participants approximately 10 years after completion of high school. Those involved in the research were reinterviewed between 9 and 13 years after leaving high school and all were White males. Sample sizes for these studies ranged from 2,098 in the High School and Beyond data set to 24,041 in the Project Talent data set. The research analyzed by Kuhn and Weinberger illustrated how experiences in leadership positions in school, such as club president or team captain, help students not only earn significantly higher wages as adults but also increase the likelihood of becoming managers in the future.

Students who are at-risk for dropping out of school who were exposed to a broad range of extracurricular activities improved important social skills including befriending healthy peers, developing competencies, learning to act independently, as well as having higher rates of college enrollment (Peck et al., 2008). Those individuals who participate earlier in extracurricular activities have a drop-out rate much lower than those students who participated later in school (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). This same study found that

by participating in at least one extracurricular activity, students enhance the perceptions of their own positive characteristics which strengthens their connection to the school and in turn will lower the likelihood of dropping out of school.

There have been mixed findings on the relationship between extracurricular activities and risky behaviors. Those involved in athletics were predicted to have a higher rate of alcohol use (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Stress and anxiety levels were found to be increased for those involved in highly competitive extracurricular activities (Fredricks et al., 2002). Rates of risky behaviors such as underage drinking, drugs, and driving drunk were lower overall among students involved in pro-social activities such as sports and clubs, although athletes were more likely to get drunk than nonathletes (Eccles et al., 2003). Fredricks and Eccles (2006) used data from the Childhood and Beyond Study of 498 adolescents collected in eight waves beginning in kindergarten and ending with the participants being in their 20s. Participants were from three middle-class communities in the Detroit area and were selected so family income and resources would not be obstacles in support of extracurricular involvement. Students and their families completed surveys with constructs such as school engagement, academic performance, characteristics of the peer group, risky behavior, and demographic information. A separate study also found that participation in both school athletics and clubs in a structured environment predicted lower alcohol and marijuana use for boys only due to less exposure to problematic peers (Fredricks & Eccles). According to their findings, being involved in multiple structured activities is more often associated with positive outcomes for children and adolescents.

Limiting the Number of Activities

The belief that students who participate in activities such as art clubs, sports, and

other organizations are exposed to positive developmental opportunities and academic outcomes has been substantiated by research (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Lipscomb, 2007; Peck et al., 2008). Participation in extracurricular activities becomes important to adolescents as a method to establish their interests, making friends, and determining how they fit in with peers (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Some research has determined that students who participate at extremely high levels have diminishing returns with regards to positive effects (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002).

Some research points to limiting the number of activities adolescents are involved in to maximize achievement and build a sense of belonging. Fitting in at school is an important part of academic motivation, self-efficacy, and performance (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008). There is limited evidence that supports that the pattern of extracurricular activities participated in will predict positive educational outcomes more than the amount of time engaged in these activities (Peck et al., 2008). All school-based extracurricular activities offered should include a variety of areas of interest for students in order to foster a sense of belonging and allow individuals choices (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Students who participate in one or more activities at school have more positive attitudes about school, higher aspirations for success academically, and higher grades than nonparticipants (Darling et al., 2005).

Students who participate in a varying range of activities are predicted to perform better academically and have a more favorable peer context (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). This combination of structured extracurricular activities was associated with beneficial outcomes for children. Fredricks and Eccles (2006) also found that those adolescents participating in activities in eleventh grade had higher GPAs and greater expectations regarding their educational attainment during and following high school. Later research

conducted by Fredricks and Eccles (2010) using threshold models determined that while participation relates to better academic outcomes, high levels of participation may take time away from schoolwork. Although participation in extracurricular activities has positive effects on academic outcomes, there may be a threshold where higher levels of involvement predict additional positive outcomes.

A longitudinal study conducted by Knifsend and Graham (2011) studied the relationship between the breadth of extracurricular activities adolescents participate in and the effects on academic achievement. Students were selected from 11 ethnically diverse, urban Title I middle schools and participated from the eighth grade through the twelfth grade. Each student answered questionnaires in the middle of each academic term, was allowed to ask questions from trained research assistants individually, and was paid $20 each time they participated. The research found that adolescents who were involved with two activities (optimal number) had a greater sense of belonging at school than those students who were involved with three or more. This optimal number of activities was also suggested as a factor against dropping out of school prematurely. According to the findings of this study, limiting the number of activities adolescents participate in allows students the opportunity to foster relationships with others, promoting a sense of belonging in the school. Limiting the number of activities also helps students obtain better grades.

Skills or Characteristics Gained and/or Enhanced Through Participation

Participation in school clubs and athletic teams was related to higher grades and educational expectations as compared to nonparticipants (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). These findings were suggested to be linked to the likelihood of participants associating with peers who valued academics and had a greater commitment

to school. Fredricks and Eccles (2006) also cited athletics as an outlet for students to receive positive feedback from adults and peers which creates more opportunities for public recognition. Athletes often receive more positive public recognition than participants in other school-based activities. Athletic participation has been argued to increase the social status of participants, thus placing them into a *leading crowd* within the school which usually consists of academically oriented peers (Broh, 2002). These associations with school activities also provide opportunities for students to have strong connections to the school that are positive and voluntary (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Having a positive adult in the lives of high school students also enables them to create a supportive relationship to help maneuver through the high-risk teen years (Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003).

Students have more opportunities to build interpersonal competences and develop future educational plans through their involvement in extracurricular activities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). By participating, students meet and interact with supportive peers and adults who contribute to the ideals of being valuable members of the community (Eccles et al., 2003). The ability to have interactions and conversations with teachers provided student-athletes more opportunities to improve their grades, either through encouraged behavior to conform to school norms, social bonds to perform better for teachers with which they have personal relationships, and even teacher bias in some cases (Broh, 2002). Future job interviews are also dependent on these skills learned from extracurricular activities according to Chia (2005), who found that soft skill competencies are needed in today's changing economy. Technical skills needed for specific jobs were seen as less important to the business community than soft skills due to the speed of changes occurring in global business markets.

Adolescents engaged in extracurricular activities are provided a structured and safe environment, away from high-risk after-school events. This structure may also contribute to positive skill development in adolescents. Key social and self-efficacy skills such as learning to work with others, conflict resolution, leadership, academic, or athletic skills, are all positive effects from extracurricular involvement (Zaff et al., 2003). These skills were seen as a possible segue into increased civic engagement in the future such as voting and volunteer work. Structured environments for extracurricular activities are also linked to increased cognitive and emotional development for adolescents involved in sports (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). According to this research, those involved learn problem-solving skills (cognitive) and are better emotionally adjusted (emotional) than nonparticipants.

Having successful experiences in athletics, such as learning a new skill, are thought to help develop maturity and self-confidence in adolescents that carry over into academic endeavors (Fejgin, 1994). These same results from national longitudinal studies have shown that participation in sports increases adolescents' work ethic, self-concept, and locus of control. Sports participation helps build character that has direct positive influences on students' academic achievements (Broh, 2002). This study also argued that being involved in athletics created social ties with other students, teachers, and community members that were advantageous to educational pursuits by students.

Involvement in extracurricular activities has also been linked to future civic engagement as young adults have opportunities to learn and practice both interpersonal and leadership skills (Eccles et al., 2003). Working together in groups and/or teams towards a common goal as well as increasing the confidence one has in his/her abilities to reach that goal could lead to increased civic engagement, voting in important elections,

and achieving academic goals like college attendance (Zaff et al., 2003).

Hancock, Hyjer Dyk, and Jones (2012) examined student participation in extracurricular activities at school and in the community to assess the influence of supportive adults and the various positions engaged on leadership skills. Students in Grades 9-12 from three suburban high schools in northern Kentucky were included in this study. Two classes in each grade at the regular and advanced level of each high school were randomly selected to participate. A stratified sampling strategy produced similar numbers with regards to grade-level participants of 647 students with 149 freshmen, 158 sophomores, 181 juniors, and 159 seniors. Demographics for the sample mirrored the overall student population with 92% White, 1.2% African-American, 1.4% Asian, and 5.4% Other, with 358 females and 289 males. A 74-question voluntary survey, which was piloted with a previous set of high school students from another school district, was conducted over a 4-day period to students in their English classes. These questions were adapted from multiple research instruments including the Youth-Adult Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale survey (Jones & Perkins, 2005), Search Institute's Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors survey (1996) and the 4-H essential Elements (Kress, 2004). The research found that adolescents who participated in extracurricular activities had additional opportunities to build leadership skills due to positive, active, and constant support from adults. Parental support was a significant predictor of an adolescent's perception of their leadership skills in any sport, club, or community extracurricular activity. Youth benefit from having more involved roles in extracurricular activities, such as an official position in a club or sport. Females who participated in extracurricular sport activities were found to have a more positive perception of their leadership skills than their male counterparts.

Soft/noncognitive skills are seen by some businesses to be more important than technical skills for employees (Chia, 2005). Businesses looking for candidates with soft/noncognitive skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, self-confidence, and interpersonal skills, want to add value to their company (Robles, 2012). Additional soft skills such as goal setting (Zaff et al., 2003), problem solving (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001), self-concept, locus of control, self-esteem, willingness to comply with rules, and time management (Broh, 2002; Caldwell & Darling 1999; Fejgin 1994; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Shann, 2001) have been determined by research to create positive outcomes for students who have participated in extracurricular activities. Multiple research studies have shown these 12 skills to be enhanced through participation in extracurricular activities.

Research Questions

1. What perceived skills or characteristics are enhanced from participating in school-based extracurricular activities?

2. What are the contributions of participation in extracurricular activities in relation to the perceived skills or characteristics gained?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine what student skills or characteristics are enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities in high school. This chapter describes the context and design of the study as well as the procedures used to gather and analyze the collected data.

Research Context and Design

The study was conducted at one high school in central North Carolina with approximately 1,600 students in Grades 9-12. Students at this high school have traditionally performed above the district and state averages on standardized tests. Demographic information for this high school is similar to other surrounding high schools: 89% Caucasian students, 4.5% African-American students, 4.5% Hispanic students, and 2% students from other races. Although 17% of the students in this school are eligible for free or reduced lunch, that number is believed to be higher. Each of the elementary and middle feeder schools report between 22-42% of their student population to be in need of free or reduced lunch. This discrepancy of lower reported numbers is common for other high schools and their feeder patterns as well ("Free and reduced," 2013).

A qualitative study was conducted in order to determine which perceived skills or characteristics were most often identified through participation in extracurricular activities. Student information was collected for this research through surveys to all current students in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades on their level of involvement in extracurricular activities between the school years 2010-2011 through 2012-2013. Ninth-grade students did not receive surveys due to a lack of opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities at the time of this research. Envelopes were provided to

teachers of tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students by the researcher containing two surveys for each student and detailed instructions for teachers attached to the front of those envelopes. Teachers were instructed to administer two surveys, stapled together, to each student in their classroom during one designated time period agreeable to the principal where the research was conducted. Students were requested to complete both surveys regarding participation in extracurricular activities while in high school. Student participation in this study was voluntary with written notification provided by the researcher on both the classroom teacher instructions and the directions at the top of page one for the student survey.

The first survey included demographic information (gender and race) for each student and a list of clubs and athletic teams. The list of clubs and athletic teams was an abbreviated list that allowed participants to include club or team names of which the researcher was unaware or unable to include in the list at the time the study was conducted. Columns for grade levels were provided at the top of the chart that allowed students to select the year in which they participated in an extracurricular activity. Students were considered participants for this study if they had either participated in at least any combination of two school-based extracurricular activities while in high school or participated in the same activity for 2 different years. Only responses from students who were deemed participants were included in this research. The qualitative instrument used to gather this student information can be found in Appendix A of this research.

The second survey was a Likert-scale survey that examined participants' opinions on skills enhanced as a result of their involvement in extracurricular activities. Each participant circled one response from a choice of five, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For study purposes, the researcher identified each question by skill as

academic, psychological, or behavioral in order to organize student responses for further analysis. The qualitative instrument used to gather this student information can be found in Appendix B of this research.

The teachers collected the surveys and delivered them to the researcher. The researcher assigned the student surveys into three categories–academic, psychological, and behavioral–according to trends or themes. Ultimately, these themes would lead to discussion regarding the contributions of extracurricular activities in the lives of high school students.

Club sponsors and coaches at the high school completed a 4-question survey regarding the specific club or team they supervised. Surveys were placed in each sponsor/coach's classroom mailbox at the school with detailed instructions provided for the completion and return of surveys to the researcher. The researcher requested each sponsor/coach identify one higher and one lower academic achieving student on his/her specific club/team and base responses for each survey question on those two students. An "H" at the top of page one for higher achieving students and an "L" at the top of page two for lower achieving students was included as clarification for those completing surveys. Sponsors and coaches were asked to return their responses to these surveys to the main office at the school for collection by the researcher. The qualitative instrument used to gather this student information can be found in Appendix C of this research.

All of the data collected through surveys to students and sponsors/coaches was analyzed through frequency distribution analysis to determine single responses or themes that were prevalent in the data collected. Information was organized for the Likert-scale survey and the sponsor/coach questionnaire in a table format to illustrate the cumulative number of responses to each of the survey questions. The table format was also used to

identify themes that were prevalent in the research regarding skills enhanced through participation as well as new skills used outside the participated arena. These tables illustrated the benefits students felt they achieved by participating in extracurricular activities as well as skills they could use in future endeavors. In addition, this information could further support current research on the benefits of participation. There were separate illustrations and analyses shown for students and sponsors/coaches for this research.

Population of Study

The population for this study included sophomores, juniors, and seniors at one public high school in central North Carolina. Current freshmen students were excluded from this study due to the lack of opportunities for involvement in school-based extracurricular activities at the time of the study, the fall of their first year of high school. Students who were included in this research have been involved in at least two school-based extracurricular activities during the 2010-2013 school years.

All tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students received surveys that included questions regarding their sex, race, and school-based extracurricular activities in which they participated while in high school. Students were also asked to complete an additional survey that included questions regarding the skills enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities. The researcher used only the results for students who were deemed participants through their involvement in either two or more activities or 2 years in the same activity.

Club sponsors and coaches where this research was conducted were given a survey regarding students who participated in school-based extracurricular activities. Questions from this survey included skills students believed were enhanced through

participation in these activities, changes in grades due to participation, and whether *too much* participation in extracurricular activities exists. All club sponsors and coaches at the chosen high school were provided the opportunity to be included in this research.

Instruments and Data Analysis

Three qualitative instruments independently validated by three educational experts in the county where this research was conducted were used and analyzed for this study. Student surveys were given to all tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students to determine who participated in school-based extracurricular activities while in high school and the grade(s) in which participation occurred (Appendix A). An additional Likert-scale survey was given to all students to determine what skills were enhanced, if any, through this involvement (Appendix B). Survey results were divided into academic, psychological, and behavioral categories to aid the researcher in contributing to current literature and establishing themes or trends from said research. The third qualitative instrument was a 4-question survey given to high school club sponsors and coaches to determine their thoughts on student skills enhanced through extracurricular involvement for both higher and lower achieving students participating in their specific club and/or team (Appendix C).

Data Collection

Each tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade student was given two surveys by his/her classroom teacher to determine his/her involvement in school-based extracurricular activities. The first survey included demographic information (race and sex) and the specific school-based activity in which a student was involved, if any, during each year of high school (Appendix A). The second survey was a Likert-scale survey (Appendix B) regarding skills enhanced through participation in school-based

extracurricular activities. Both surveys were completed within 10-15 minutes. Surveys were collected by the teacher, returned to the main office at the high school studied, then collected by the researcher for further study.

The researcher provided club sponsors and coaches at the high school studied with a 4-question survey (Appendix C) to determine their opinions on the skills learned by higher and lower achieving students, if any, who participated in school-based extracurricular activities. These surveys, completed within 10-15 minutes, were returned to the researcher for further study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this research was to determine what perceived skills or characteristics are enhanced in students through their participation in school-based extracurricular activities in high school. This chapter contains the statistical results from the research and analysis gathered through student surveys and sponsor/coach surveys to answer the study's research questions.

Demographic Data

One high school of approximately 1,600 students participated in the study. Only tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students participated in this research due to their opportunities for involvement in school-based extracurricular activities at the time the study was conducted. Those students who participated in a school-based activity at least two different times were considered participants for this research.

There were 682 student surveys completed for this study, with 466 students (68% of students) meeting the qualifications for being deemed a participant. Of the 33 sponsors and coaches asked to participate in the survey, 15 (45% of respondents) completed the 4-question survey. Tables 3 and 4 contain the demographic data for each participant group.

Table 3

Demographics for Students

Race	Male	Female	Total
White	192	213	405
Black	22	8	30
Hispanic	6	3	9
Other	10	12	22
Total	230	236	466

Table 4

Sponsor/Coach Participants

	Number of Surveys
Surveys Distributed	33
Surveys Returned	15
Total Percentage Returned	45%

Student Survey Results

Twelve of the 16 student survey questions were labeled into three different categories: academic, behavioral, and psychological. Each area had four questions with which they were categorized. Students responded to each question by choosing from one of five choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Table 5 lists each question and the appropriate category. Results and analysis of each question by category follows Table 5.

Table 5

Labeled Categories and Student Survey Questions

Academic
Q1 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better communication skills.
Q3 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better able to work with others in team situations.
Q6 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better problem-solving skills.
Q9 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better able to manage my time.
Behavioral
Q2 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better able to set goals.
Q4 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am more willing to comply with rules.
Q7 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better leadership skills
Q8 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better interpersonal skills such as being patient, friendly, and personable towards others.
Psychological
Q5 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better prepared to control different events in my life.
Q10 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am more self-confident.
Q11 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have higher self-esteem.
Q12 As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have a better self-concept about myself.

Academic Skills

Question 1. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better

communication skills. Table 6 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on having better communication skills due to participation. The data indicate that 393 participants, or 84.3%, agree or strongly agree that their activity has enabled them to improve their communication skills. Less than 4% (56 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their communication skills were enhanced through extracurriculars. Fifty-six students had no opinion.

Table 6

Responses of Perceived Academic Benefit to Communication Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	4	5	28	118	75	230
Female	2	6	28	133	67	236
Total Responses	6	11	56	251	142	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 84.3%.

Question 3. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better able to work with others in team situations. Table 7 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on teamwork due to participation. The data indicate that 408 participants, or 87.5%, agreed or strongly agreed they were better equipped to work with others in team situations due to their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 4% (42 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their teamwork skills were enhanced through their participation. Forty-two students had no opinion.

Table 7

Responses of Perceived Academic Benefit to Teamwork Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	4	9	23	100	94	230
Female	1	2	19	108	106	236
Total Responses	5	11	42	208	200	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 87.5%.

Question 6. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better problem-solving skills. Table 8 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on problem-solving skills due to participation. The data indicate that 336 participants, or 72.1%, agreed or strongly agreed they improved their problem-solving skills through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 7% (31 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their problem-solving skills were enhanced through participation. Ninety-nine students had no opinion.

Table 8

Responses of Perceived Academic Benefit to Problem-Solving Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	3	9	50	109	59	230
Female	3	16	49	118	50	236
Total Responses	6	25	99	227	109	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 72.1%.

Question 9. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better able to manage my time. Table 9 includes information on the number of participants in

extracurricular activities and their opinions on time management skills due to participation. The data indicate that 322 participants, or 69%, agreed or strongly agreed they improved their time management skills through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 11% (50 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their time management skills were enhanced through participation. Ninety-four students had no opinion.

Table 9

Responses of Perceived Academic Benefit to Time Management Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	5	21	52	96	56	230
Female	6	18	42	112	58	236
Total Responses	11	39	94	208	114	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses - 69%.

Behavioral Skills

Question 2. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better able to set goals. Table 10 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on goal-setting skills due to participation. The data indicate that 384 participants, or 82.4%, agreed or strongly agreed they improved their goal setting skills through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 4% (21 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their goal setting skills were enhanced through participation. Sixty-one students had no opinion.

Table 10

Responses of Perceived Behavioral Benefit to Goal Setting Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	4	10	32	110	74	230
Female	1	6	29	136	64	236
Total Responses	5	16	61	246	138	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 82.4%.

Question 4. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am more willing to comply with rules. Table 11 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on their willingness to comply with rules due to participation. The data indicate that 335 participants, or 71.8%, agreed or strongly agreed they improved their willingness to comply with rules through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 9% (38 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their willingness to comply with rules were enhanced through participation. Ninety-three students had no opinion.

Table 11

Responses of Perceived Behavioral Benefit of Willingness to Comply with Rules

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	8	16	45	105	56	230
Female	2	12	48	117	57	236
Total Responses	10	28	93	222	113	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 71.8%.

Question 7. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better leadership skills. Table 12 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on leadership skills due to participation. The data indicate that 400 participants, or 85.8%, agreed or strongly agreed they improved their goal-setting skills through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 4% (15 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their goal-setting skills were enhanced through participation. Fifty-one students had no opinion.

Table 12

Responses of Perceived Behavioral Benefit to Leadership Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	2	5	28	99	96	230
Female	1	7	23	111	94	236
Total Responses	3	12	51	210	190	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 85.8%.

Question 8. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have better interpersonal skills such as being patient, friendly, and personable towards others. Table 13 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities

and their opinions on interpersonal skills due to participation. The data indicate that 373 participants, or 80%, agreed or strongly agreed they improved their interpersonal skills through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 6% (25 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their interpersonal skills were enhanced through participation. Sixty-eight students had no opinion.

Table 13

Responses of Perceived Behavioral Benefit to Interpersonal Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	5	9	39	114	63	230
Female	1	10	29	115	81	236
Total Responses	6	19	68	229	144	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses - 80%.

Psychological Skills

Question 5. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am better prepared to control different events in my life. Table 14 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on locus of control due to participation. The data indicate that 340 participants, or 72.9%, agreed or strongly agreed they improved their locus of control through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 7% (31 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their abilities to better control the events in their lives were enhanced through participation. Ninety-five students had no opinion.

Table 14

Responses of Perceived Psychological Benefit to Locus of Control Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	2	13	45	109	61	230
Female	2	14	50	120	50	236
Total Responses	4	27	95	229	111	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 72.9%.

Question 10. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I am more self-confident. Table 15 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on being more self-confident due to participation. The data indicate that 374 participants, or 80.2%, agreed or strongly agreed they were more self-confident through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 6% (24 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed they were more self-confident through participation. Sixty-eight students had no opinion.

Table 15

Responses of Perceived Psychological Benefit to Self-Confidence Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	2	7	30	106	85	230
Female	4	11	38	107	76	236
Total Responses	6	18	68	213	161	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 80.2%.

Question 11. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have higher self-esteem. Table 16 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on having higher self-esteem due to participation. The data

indicate that 337 participants, or 72.3%, agreed or strongly agreed they had higher self-esteem through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 10% (43 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their self-esteem was enhanced through participation. Eighty-six students had no opinion.

Table 16

Responses of Perceived Psychological Benefit to Self-Esteem Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	5	12	35	116	62	230
Female	7	19	51	115	44	236
Total Responses	12	31	86	231	106	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 72.3%.

Question 12. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have a better self-concept about myself. Table 17 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on having a better self-concept due to participation. The data indicate that 346 participants, or 74.2%, agreed or strongly agreed they had a better self-concept about themselves through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 5% (23 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed their self-concept was enhanced through participation. Eighty-six students had no opinion.

Table 17

Responses of Perceived Psychological Benefit to Self-Concept Skills

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	3	5	41	131	50	230
Female	6	9	56	117	48	236
Total Responses	9	14	97	248	98	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 74.2%.

Four additional questions were included with student surveys that were not labeled into one of the three categories (academic, behavioral, or psychological). This information was gathered for further analysis to aid in establishing possible trends in the data as well as supporting current research. The additional questions and data are listed below.

Question 13. As a result of my extracurricular activities, I have skills that I use in other areas of my life including school, work, and/or home. Table 18 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on having skills they are able to use in other areas of their lives due to participation. The data indicate that 395 participants, or 84.7%, agreed or strongly agreed that because of extracurricular activities, they have skills they are able to use in other areas of their lives including school, work, and/or home through their participation in extracurriculars. Less than 5% (21 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they enhanced skills that are able to be used in other areas of their lives through participation. Fifty students had no opinion.

Table 18

Responses of Perceived Skills Used in Areas Outside Activity

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	4	8	21	126	71	230
Female	1	8	29	124	74	236
Total Responses	5	16	50	250	145	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses - 84.7%.

Question 14. I do better in school so that I can continue to participate in clubs and/or athletics. Table 19 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions on performing better in school in order to continue participating in clubs and/or athletics. The data indicate that 300 participants, or 64.3%, agreed or strongly agreed they performed better in school in order to continue participating in clubs and/or athletics. Less than 17% (75 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they performed better in school in order to continue participating in clubs and/or athletics. Ninety-one students had no opinion.

Table 19

Responses of Students Who Succeed in School to Participate in Extracurricular Activities

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	7	23	53	87	60	230
Female	8	37	38	95	58	236
Total Responses	15	60	91	182	118	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 64.3%.

Question 15. I only attend school so that I can participate in clubs and/or athletics. Table 20 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular

activities and their opinions on only attending school to participate in clubs and/or athletics. The data indicate that 103 participants, or 22.1%, agreed or strongly agreed they only attended school so they could participate in clubs and/or athletics. More than 62% (293 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they only attended school to participate in clubs and/or athletics. Seventy students had no opinion.

Table 20

Responses of Students Who Only Attend School to Participate in Extracurricular Activities

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	81	57	39	35	18	230
Female	70	85	31	37	13	236
Total Responses	151	142	70	72	31	466

Note. Percent Positive Responses – 22.1%.

Question 16. Circle the letter that corresponds to what type of student you think you are. Responses included A, B, C, D, or F. Table 21 includes information on the number of participants in extracurricular activities and their opinions regarding how each performs academically in school (A, B, C, D, or F student). The data indicate that out of the 466 high school students deemed as participants for this study, 229 participants (49.14%) felt as though they performed as "A" students, 174 participants (37.33%) performed as "B" students, 50 participants (10.72%) performed as "C" students, five participants (1.07%) performed as "D" students, and eight participants (1.71%) performed as "F" students. There were 453 participants, or 97.19%, that thought of themselves as an "A," "B," or "C" student.

Table 21

Student Self-Assessment of Individual Academic Performance

Gender	A	B	C	D	F	Total
Male	97	92	30	3	8	230
Female	132	82	20	2	0	236
Total Responses	229	174	50	5	8	466

Note. Percent "C" or Better – 97.2%.

Sponsor/Coach Questionnaire Results

Club sponsors and athletic team coaches were asked four questions regarding one higher-achieving student and one lower-achieving student in the school sponsored club or sport they represented. The four questions with results for higher- and lower-achieving students are shown separately below in Table 22.

Question 1. What skills do you think students enhance through participation in school-based extracurricular activities such as athletics or clubs? Do these skills enhanced contribute to academic success? Ten sponsors/coaches responded to part two of Question 1 with "yes" and one answered "yes for eligibility purposes" (100%). There were zero "no" responses to part two of Question 1.

The only response/quote for a high-achieving student for Question 1 was from a sponsor: "The best thing that has helped a higher level student from being in my club is opening their eyes to other perspectives and to new people. Having an open mind can certainly help academic success." There were two responses/quotes for lower-achieving students for Question 1: "Social skills were improved – this was a very reserved student and he has come out of his shell after being a club member." "Students learn teamwork and time management. They also must have a degree of responsibility and accountability

to the other members, the sponsors, and the school."

Through participation in extracurricular activities, students have the opportunity to work towards a common goal with students of varying ability levels and also to improve in areas such as teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal skills. This supports research from Covey and Carbonaro (2010) in Chapter 2 that participation in extracurricular activities affords students the opportunities to practice skills such as teamwork and cooperation. Research from Eccles et al. (2003) also illustrates how these interactions likely contribute to increased school engagement, achievement, and long-term educational outcomes from these cultural experiences and discussions.

Table 22

Sponsor/Coach Perceptions of Student Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

High-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Leadership	8	8	22.2%
Time Management	6	14	16.6
Social Skills	5	19	13.8
Teamwork	5	24	13.8
Organization	2	26	5.5
Accountability	1	27	2.7
Confidence	1	28	2.7
Dependability	1	29	2.7
Discipline	1	30	2.7
Go the Extra Mile	1	31	2.7
Hard Work	1	32	2.7
Maturity Level	1	33	2.7
Mentoring	1	34	2.7
Perseverance	1	35	2.7
Prioritizing	1	36	2.7

Low-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Leadership	4	4	13.3%
Teamwork	4	8	13.3
Social Skills	3	11	10.0
Time Management	3	14	10.0
Accountability	2	16	6.6
Hard Work	2	18	6.6
Responsibility	2	20	6.6
Organization	2	22	6.6
Attendance	1	23	3.3
Mentoring	1	24	3.3
Perseverance	1	25	3.3
Positive Peer Interaction	1	26	3.3
Prioritizing	1	27	3.3
Problem-Solving	1	28	3.3
Self-Esteem	1	29	3.3
School Work	1	30	3.3

Question 2. What skills enhanced through participating in extracurricular activities do you think students use outside or away from the activities themselves?

Sponsor/coach results above support research findings that participation in school-based extracurricular activities improves student skills such as communication, leadership, and teamwork. Positive connections to adults (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Hancock et al.,

2012; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Zaff et al., 2003) provide students additional opportunities to gain supportive feedback from adults, increase emotional development, and build leadership skills.

Table 23

Sponsor/Coach Perceptions of Skills Students use Outside/Away from Extracurricular Activities Themselves

High-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Social/Communication	7	7	21.2%
Leadership	5	12	15.1
Teamwork	5	17	15.1
Critical Thinking	2	19	6
Hard Work	2	21	6
Responsibility	2	23	6
Accountability	1	24	3
Attention to Details	1	25	3
Dependability	1	26	3
Discipline	1	27	3
Empathy Towards Others	1	28	3
Maturity	1	29	3
Resume Building	1	30	3
Selflessness	1	31	3
Technology Skills	1	32	3
Time Management	1	33	3

Low-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Social/Communication	8	8	27.5%
Teamwork	5	13	17.2
Leadership	3	16	10.3
Time Management	2	18	6.8
Accountability	2	20	6.8
Hard Work	2	22	6.8
Responsibility	2	24	6.8
Attendance/On-Time	1	25	3.4
Perseverance	1	26	3.4
Positive Adult	1	27	3.4
Problem-Solving	1	28	3.4
Self-Esteem	1	29	3.4

Question 3. Do you think participating in school-based extracurricular activities in high school helps or hurts students' grades? Why? Based on the sponsor/coach survey answers to Question 3, there were 13 responses that can be classified as helping students' grades, and three responses that can be classified as hurting students' grades. The results for Question 3 are illustrated in the charts below.

Table 24

Sponsor/Coach Perceptions of Why Extracurricular Activities Help/Hurt Grades

Help Grades – High-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Better Time Management	5	5	20%
Helps to Maintain Eligibility	3	8	12
Positive Peer Influence	3	11	12
More Committed to School/Program	3	14	12
Adults Checking on Students	2	16	8
More Informed of Options at School	2	18	8
Better Behavior	1	19	4
Clubs help – No Explanation Given	1	20	4
Improved Grades	1	21	4
Helps Get Into College	1	22	4
Helps If They Balance Both	1	23	4
Real-World Experiences	1	24	4
Work Ethic	1	25	4

Hurt Grades – High-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Both Hurt Loss of Study Time	1	1	33.3%
If Only Doing to Help Build Resume	1	2	33.3
Sports Hurt Due to Loss of Study Time	1	3	33.3

Help Grades – Low-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Helps to Maintain Eligibility	3	3	25%
Accountability	2	5	16.6
Positive Connection to School	2	7	16.6
Time Management	2	9	16.6
Builds Confidence and Academic Skills	1	10	8.3
Clubs Help With Academics	1	11	8.3
Builds Confidence and Academic Skills	1	12	8.3

Hurt Grades – Low-Achieving Students

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Do Not Know How to Balance Both	1	1	50%
Sports Hurt Study Time	1	2	50

Sponsor/coach responses to whether student participation in school-based extracurricular activities for both high- and low-achieving students helps or hurts participant's grades favored student involvement. Positive survey results support previous research on the benefits for students to participate in school-based

extracurricular activities including positive peer/adult connections to school and commitment to the school and/or program (Eccles et al., 2003; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997), improved grades and behavior (Broh, 2002; Fejgin, 1994; Lipscomb, 2007; Whitley, 1995), future educational aspirations (Eccles et al., 2003; Elder & Conger, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Peck et al., 2008; Roser & Peck, 2003; Youniss et al., 1999), and soft skills such as work ethic, confidence, and time management skills (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Hanson & Kraus, 1998).

Four of the five responses from sponsors/coaches where extracurricular activities could hurt students' grades centered on the loss of study time (time management) for participants and included both high- and low-achieving students. One sponsor considered athletics to take away from study time for both high- and low-achieving students while one sponsor thought extracurricular activities would be detrimental to academic achievement if the student was involved only to build a resume. Time management was a skill some sponsors/coaches indicated as helping student grades (five of 15 respondents for high-achieving students and two of 15 respondents for low-achieving students). Although specific research on negative effects of school-based extracurricular activities on time management was not found by this researcher, Din (2005) found no significant difference in athletes' grades preseason or postseason.

Question 4. Do you think there can be "too much" participation in extracurricular activities? Why?

Table 25

Sponsor/Coach Perception – Can There Be Too Much Participation in Extracurriculars?

High-Achieving Students – Yes

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Spread Yourself Too Thin	8	8	34.7%
Extra Stress	5	13	21.7
Burned Out	4	17	17.3
If Just to Build Resume	2	19	8.6
Loss of Sleep	2	21	8.6
Takes Away from Core Academics	2	23	8.6

High-Achieving Students – No

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Adults' Lives Are Busy – Learn Time Management	1	1	50%
Keeps Many Out of Trouble	1	2	50

Low-Achieving Students – Yes

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Interferes With School Work	2	2	22.2%
Stress	2	4	22.2
Burned Out	1	5	11.1
Just Building Resume	1	6	11.1
Lack of Rest	1	7	11.1
Poor Time Management	1	8	11.1
Usually Does Not Apply to This Type of Student	1	9	11.1

Low-Achieving Student – No

Skills	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percent of Total
Idle Time Leads to Lack of Effort and Procrastination	1	1	100%

According to sponsor/coach results, both high- and low-achieving student grades may suffer from too much involvement in school-based extracurricular activities. Added stress, lack of rest, burning out, and building a resume were responses provided indicating the results of overparticipation. A limit was not provided from respondents as to the optimal number of activities for students to participate in, although research from Knifsend and Graham (2011) indicated two activities as the maximum preferred based on

their findings. Only three sponsors/coaches responded that there cannot be too much participation, indicating that students will learn time management and avoid problematic behaviors by remaining involved in school-based extracurricular activities.

Research Question 1

1. What perceived skills or characteristics are enhanced from participating in school-based extracurricular activities?

Based on student survey results collected on 12 different skills during this research, labeled as academic, behavioral, and psychological, and open-ended survey responses from sponsors and coaches, the findings not only support research from Chapter 2 but also suggest that each skill would be enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities. With a total of 5,592 student responses, 83 (1.4%) strongly disagreed, 251 (4.4%) disagreed, 910 (16.2%) had no opinion, 2,722 (48.6%) agreed, and 1,626 (29%) strongly agreed that each of the 12 skills were enhanced during the school activity or activities for which they were engaged. An average of 77.7% strongly agreed or agreed that the 12 skills surveyed were enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities, while 5.9% either strongly disagreed or disagreed that their skills were enhanced through participation. The four skills enhanced the most through participation according to students were teamwork (87.5%), leadership (85.8%), communication (84.3%), and goal setting (82.4%).

Sponsor/coach written survey results (15) also support previous literature and student survey results from this research that specific skills are enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities. Leadership was deemed the most important skill for both higher- and lower-achieving students according to sponsor/coach survey results. Teamwork was also categorized for higher- and lower-achieving students

as an important skill for students (eight respondents and four respondents), which was the highest skill enhanced according to student surveys at 87.5%. According to sponsors and coaches, the four skills enhanced the most through participation in extracurricular activities for higher-achieving students were leadership, time management, social skills, and teamwork. For lower-achieving students, sponsors and coaches agreed that the same four skills were the most important but in a different order: leadership, teamwork, social skills, and time management.

Research Question 2

2. What are the contributions of participation in extracurricular activities in relation to the perceived skills or characteristics gained?

Survey findings from this research support previous literature that skills enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities are applicable outside of the activities themselves. Student survey findings indicate that 84.7% have skills enhanced through extracurricular activities they practice in areas such as school, home, and/or work (Question 13). Teamwork (87.5%), leadership (85.8%), communication (84.3%), goal setting (82.4%), and self-confidence (80.2%) were skills students regarded as most useful in their daily lives. Table 25 ranks these 12 skills based on percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed that skills were improved through participation. Labels for each skill were also included.

Table 26

Skills Ranked By Importance, Percentage, and Label

Rank	Skill Enhanced	Percentage	Skill Label
1	Teamwork	87.5	Academic
2	Leadership	85.8	Behavioral
3	Communication	84.3	Academic
4	Goal Setting	82.4	Behavioral
5	Self-confidence	80.2	Psychological
6	Interpersonal	80	Behavioral
7	Self-concept	74.2	Psychological
8	Locus of Control	72.9	Psychological
9	Self-esteem	72.3	Psychological
10	Problem solving	72.1	Academic
11	Comply with Rules	71.8	Behavioral
12	Time Management	69	Academic

Sponsor/coach survey results indicate that social/communication, leadership, and teamwork are skills that are most transferable between school-related extracurricular activities and other nonrelated activities, regardless of academic standing. Social/communication skills were deemed most transferable by sponsors and coaches, concluding that 47% of higher achieving students and 53% of lower achieving students are capable of using this skill in other outlets of life.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to determine what perceived skills or characteristics are enhanced in students through their participation in school-based extracurricular activities while in high school. This chapter includes summary findings, conclusions, limitations of this study, and possible recommendations for future studies associated with school-based extracurricular activities and skill development.

Summary

One high school in central North Carolina participated in this research study to determine what perceived skills are enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities. Each tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade student was provided the opportunity to voluntarily participate in completing two surveys that would be used to determine both their level of participation and their opinion on skills enhanced or improved through their involvement in extracurricular activities. In order to be considered a participant, students must have either participated in two different school-based activities while in high school or the student must have participated in one activity in 2 different years. From the 682 surveys completed, 466 students met the criteria for being considered as participants for this research. Twelve skills were included and labeled as academic, behavioral, or psychological for research purposes. Sponsors and coaches at the school where this research was conducted where provided four open-ended survey questions regarding skills improved, skills used outside of the extracurricular activity, involvement in activities while in high school helping/hurting student grades, and if there can be *too much* participation in extracurricular activities for students. Results were assessed by frequency distribution and illustrated by various tables throughout this research.

Conclusions

This research concludes that students believe their involvement in school-based extracurricular activities not only enhanced the 12 skills considered for this study but also that the skills are transferrable to other areas of their lives including school, work, and/or home. This research also concludes that sponsors/coaches believe skills enhanced through participation in extracurricular activities contribute to academic success for students. These findings support current research that through participation in school-based extracurricular activities students learn and are able to apply skills that lead to higher academic success and future educational endeavors (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006) as well as future job opportunities that require soft skills (Chia, 2005; Robles, 2012) found to be enhanced in this study, such as teamwork, communication, and interpersonal. The results of this study lead to the conclusion that characteristics and/or skills are enhanced for students through participation in school-based extracurricular activities in high school and they are also transferable to areas outside of the activity where they were improved producing possible positive future outcomes for students in other areas of life. These findings are consistent with previous research related to this topic.

Why then should students participate in school-based extracurricular activities? This research determined that high school students enhanced 12 specific soft/ noncognitive skills (communication, leadership, teamwork, interpersonal, compliance with rules, goal setting, locus of control, problem solving, time management, self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-concept) through participation in extracurricular activities. Not only were these skills enhanced, participants also agreed that these skills were transferable to other areas of their lives such as school, work, or home. Sponsors

and coaches also agreed that students who participate in extracurricular activities have enhanced skills that are transferable as well as skills that contribute to a student's overall academic success.

Students who have enhanced skills through participation in extracurricular activities have transferable skills to school, work, and/or home. A first-year participant on the wrestling team learns that through hard work and dedication he is able to improve throughout the season and gain self-confidence. Through the findings of this research, that student might be more willing to apply that skill to school and either attempt an honors-level course instead of taking a regular course or even an advanced placement course rather than the honors-level course. That student has improved a skill and transferred it towards academic endeavors, which could also lead to grades and financial aid/scholarships that were previously not attainable.

A band member becomes a section leader and improves his/her leadership, interpersonal, and communication skills through daily interactions with students and adults during practices. These are transferable skills businesses are looking for that add future employment opportunities for that student. These transferable skills allow the student to become a better candidate for future job opportunities.

A student having difficulties following rules at home becomes an officer in his school's FBLA Club and develops a positive working relationship with the club sponsor. This participant realizes through interactions with club members and other adults at various competitions that in order for him to be successful at these competitions, there are certain procedures he must follow. This relationship illustrates to the student the importance of following proper procedures and the student applies that skill at home when discussing rules with his/her parents. This skill has helped create a more satisfying

and less stressful home environment due to the student being willing to comply with rules at home.

Fredricks and Eccles (2006), Shann (2001), Caldwell and Darling (1999), and Fejgin (1994) conducted studies that are supported by this research that students who participate in extracurricular activities are more willing to conform to school norms and comply with rules. Based on these findings, one can deduce that students who are more willing to comply with school rules are less likely to engage in activities that interrupt classroom instruction, thus having fewer discipline problems. Fewer interruptions lead to additional instructional time for students to clarify misconceptions and an increase in positive academic outcomes for participants. By being more willing to comply with school rules, participants also create positive connections to school where productive, beneficial relationships with teachers, coaches, and/or club sponsors exist. Rather than spend valuable monetary and human resources adopting programs to address discipline concerns for each school, districts can institute additional extracurricular programs that would reduce discipline incidents while simultaneously provide opportunities for students to enhance skills needed for school, home, and future employment.

The benefits of having students involved in extracurricular activities extend to the school as well by advancing a positive school culture to everyone, including nonparticipants. A positive school climate may encourage nonparticipants to become engaged in school activities when they otherwise would not due to the conclusive outcomes witnessed school-wide.

Fredricks and Eccles's (2006) examination of the positive academic, behavioral, and psychological outcomes students receive from their participation in extracurricular activities are supported by the 12 skills considered to be enhanced by involvement in

extracurricular activities presented in this research. Sponsor/coach results also support student data that academic, behavioral, and psychological skills are all vital to future educational and work opportunities for high school students. Whether one is able to apply teamwork skills to a group educational/work setting or use communication skills to further one's career in a job interview, these are skills that students improve through participation in school-based extracurricular activities.

Bronson (2007) found that businesses are concerned that high school graduates do not possess the work ethic skills or professionalism necessary for the workplace. Chia (2005) also found that soft/noncognitive skills important for success in multinational accounting firms were rarely taught in formal accounting programs. Robles (2012) found that corporations want candidates with soft/noncognitive skills that can add value to their business. This research has concluded that students, club sponsors, and coaches recognize that participants in school-based extracurricular activities learn important soft/noncognitive skills businesses value while in high school that prepare them for future employment. Therefore, based on this and previous research, schools that offer additional opportunities for students to enhance these skills through participation in extracurricular activities are better preparing their students for future educational and employment possibilities during and after high school than schools that do not offer extracurricular activities. Additional opportunities for students to practice and develop important academic, behavioral, and psychological skills while in high school are beneficial for futures endeavors.

With companies needing workers having soft skills that bring value to their businesses, it is important for schools to develop methods to enhance these attributes in their students. Research has shown that students who participate in school-based

extracurricular activities have skills that better prepare them for both future educational and professional endeavors. District personnel should designate adequate funding for quality sponsors and coaches who are able to properly develop these important life skills for students. Also, districts should consider the implementation of additional voluntary extracurricular activities as alternatives to current discipline and behavioral programs that take valuable monetary resources from core instruction and serve only as punitive systems of compliance. Building-level personnel should encourage and monitor student participation in extracurricular activities to ensure students are exposed to every available personal developmental opportunity schools offer that better prepare their students for future educational and career opportunities.

Limitations

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are several limitations to this study that may have effects on the results and conclusions.

1. Only one high school surveyed for research.
2. Socioeconomic and racial makeup of student body.
3. Instruments used for data collection.

There was only one high school used for this research which could have produced a myriad of problems with collected data due to variables not considered for this study. As stated in Chapter 1, assuming that all high schools in North Carolina are identical to the information found in this research is not possible. Course offerings, class size, and/or socioeconomic factors vary from school to school and were not considered for this research. The total number of valid responses to surveys was substantial and enabled trends to be established based on the data collected. As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to determine skills or characteristics that are enhanced through

participation in extracurricular activities.

Although socioeconomic information was not used for this research, data were available for the racial makeup of both the school and county where the study was conducted. The racial makeup of participants included in this study was similar to that of the county, therefore allowing for assumptions that some schools located in this county would have similar determinations to this research. Academic performance was not a factor as only one participant listed as "Other" responded they were less than a "C" student.

Instruments used to gather information for this research included two student surveys and one 4-question survey for club sponsors and coaches that allowed for written responses. The researcher must assume that the information provided by students and sponsors/coaches is honest and accurate data. No other means of clarification for this data was available, such as individual interviews. Several students included written responses adjacent to survey questions to clarify their answers, none of which influenced or changed the results provided.

Recommendations

This research was conducted to determine if there were skills or characteristics that students enhance through participation in school-based extracurricular activities in high school. Twelve student skills were studied, and all were determined to be enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities. Future research might target variables that affect these skills such as socioeconomic, family support, and even available teachers, sponsors, and coaches who can properly develop these student competencies. Further socioeconomic investigations could add to research conducted by Peck et al. (2008) and Fredricks and Eccles (2006).

Additional research could be conducted at more than one school to ascertain if skill enhancement also occurs across school and/or district lines. Although a substantial amount of data was available at the school studied that enabled the researcher to establish trends, schools are not identical in makeup including enrollment, staffing, or courses offered that could influence student perceptions of school and the activities offered.

A more in-depth review of clubs and sports can occur to determine what gains in skills occur in specific activities. This research was conducted to determine if skills were improved through participation in extracurricular activities, not which skills were enhanced through each specific club or sport. Research conducted in collegiate business classrooms by Robles (2012) found corporations want candidates with soft skills that add value to their businesses. This research found that certain academic, behavioral, and psychological skills were enhanced through participation in high school extracurricular activities. Further research at the high school level may establish connections that target skills specific to each club or sport that aid in preparing students for future endeavors.

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Appendix A

Student Survey

To: Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Grade High School Students
From: Jonathan Hayes

I am currently conducting a study for my dissertation that examines skills or characteristics that are enhanced through participation in school-based extracurricular activities. Please answer the following questions regarding your identity and your level of involvement in school-based extracurricular activities. This is a voluntary survey. **DO NOT write your name on this paper. Your name is not needed for this study.** Thank you for your help.

Please check the appropriate box for the activities that you participated in during high school. Only include the activities that you completed the entire season or year. *If a club or sport you participated in is not on this form, please fill in at the end the name and years that you participated in that activity.*

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Race: White _____ Black _____ Hispanic_____ Other _____

Activity	9th	10th	11th	12th
Athletic Trainer				
Baseball				
Basketball				
Cheerleading				
Cross Country				
Football				
Golf				
Indoor Track				
Soccer				
Softball				
Swimming				
Tennis				
Track				
Volleyball				
Wrestling				
Dance Team				
Debate Team				
Marching Band				
Student Government				
Club 1				
Club 2				
Club 3				
Club 4				
Club 5				

Appendix B

Participant Survey – Likert Scale

Participant Survey

Please answer the following questions by circling the response you feel is most accurate.

1. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I have better communication skills.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

2. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I am better able to set goals.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

3. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I am better able to work with others in team situations.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

4. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I am a more willing to comply with rules.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

5. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I am better prepared to control different events in my life.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

6. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I have better problem-solving skills.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

7. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I have better leadership skills.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

8. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I have better interpersonal skills such as being patient, friendly, and personable towards others.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

9. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I am better able to manage my time.
   Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

10. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I am more self-confident.
    Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Disagree Agree

11. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I have higher self-esteem.
    Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly
    Disagree Agree

12. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I have a better self-concept about myself.
    Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly
    Disagree Agree

13. As a result of my extra-curricular activities, I have skills that I use in other areas of my life including school, work, and/or home.
    Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly
    Disagree Agree

14. I do better in school so that I can continue to participate in clubs and/or athletics.
    Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly
    Disagree Agree

15. I only attend school so that I can participate in clubs and/or athletics.
    Strongly Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly
    Disagree Agree

16. Circle the letter that corresponds to what type of student you think you are.

    A B C D F

Appendix C

Sponsor/Coach Questionnaire

Sponsor/Coach Questionnaire

1. What skills do you think students enhance (improve) through participation in school-based extracurricular activities such as athletics or clubs? Do these skills enhanced contribute to academic success?

2. What skills gained or enhanced through participating in extracurricular activities do you think students use outside or away from the activities themselves?

3. Do you think participating in school-based extracurricular activities in high school helps or hurts student's grades? Why?

4. Do you think there can be "too much" participation in extracurricular activities? Why?